The Birthday of Unhappy Edgar Allan Poe

A commentator writes that when this ill-fated poet was himself he was gentle, well-bred and talented. A few of his poems reprinted.

YESTERDAY was the 109th anniversary of the birth of Edgar Allan Poe, American poet, writer of fiction and critic. He was born in Boston, Mass., on January 19, 1809, and died October 7, 1849.

His father and mother died when he was two years old, and he was adopted by John Allan, a tobacco merchant of Scottish extraction. The boy was indulged in every way, and encouraged to believe that he would inherit Mr. Allan's fortune. In 1815 the Allans went to England, and Edgar was placed in a school at Stoke Newington; upon their return to America in 1820 he was placed at school at Richmond, Va., where they were living, and six years later sent to the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. Here, as one biographer puts it, "the effects of a very unwise training on a temperament of inherited neurotic tendency were soon seen. He was fond of athletics, and was a strong and ardent swimmer; but he developed a passion for gambling and drink. His disorders made it necessary to remove him, and he was taken away by Mr. Allan, who refused to pay his debts of honor."

In May of 1827 Poe enlisted at Boston, and served for two years in the United States army. He was promoted to sergeant major on January 1, 1829. Two months later Mr. Allan obtained his discharge from the army, and in 1830 secured a nomination for him to West Point Military Academy. Charges of neglect of duty which he failed to answer caused his expulsion from the academy in March, 1831. Mr. Allan's patience was exhausted; there was "a scene of painful violence" between them, and at his death in 1834 he left his adopted son nothing.

In 1827 Poe published at Boston his first volume of poetry, "Tamerlane and Other Poems," not under his own name but as "A Bostonian." The second volume of "Poems" he published four years later in New York under his own name. From 1833 till the time of his death he was employed on various magazines at Richmond, New York and Philadelphia. When he was "free from the maddening influence of alcohol he was gentle, well bred and a hard worker on the staff of a magazine, willing and able to write reviews, answer correspondents, propound riddles or invent and solve cryptograms. . . . But his mania sooner or later broke off all his engagements and ruined his own venture" (a magazine called "Stylus"). Poe died in a hospital at Baltimore, October 7, 1849.

What has been called "a melancholy sensuous emotion in a penetrating melody all his own" is expressed in most of Poe's verse. A few of his shorter poems follow:

Catholic Hymn

AT MORN—at noon—at twilight dim—
Maria! thou hast heard my hymn!
In joy and woe—in good and ill—
Mother of God, be with me still!
When the hours flew brightly by,
And not a cloud obscured the sky,
My soul, lest it should truant be,
Thy grace did guide to thine and thee;
Now, when storms of Fate o'ercast
Darkly my Present and my Past,
Let my Future radiant shine
With sweet hope of thee and thine!

To One in Paradise

THOU wast all that to me, love,
For which my soul did pine—
A green isle in the sea, love,
A fountain and a shrine,
All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers,
And all the flowers were mine.

Ah, dream too bright to last!
Ah, starry Hope! that didst arise
But to be overcast!
A voice from out the Future cries,
"On! on!"—but o'er the Past
(Dim gulf!) my spirit hovering lies
Mute, motionless, aghast!

For, alas! alas! with me
The light of Life is o'er!
"No more—no more—no more"—
(Such language holds the solemn sea
To the sands upon the shore)
Shall bloom the thunder-blasted tree
Or the stricken eagle soar!

And all my days are trances,
And all my nightly dreams
Are where thy grey eye glances,
And where thy footstep gleams—
In what ethereal dances,
By what eternal streams.

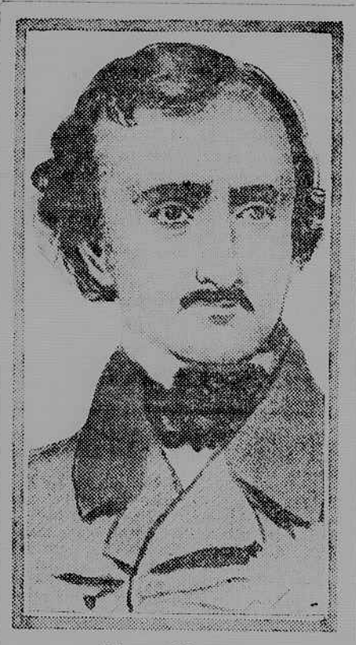
To F—s S. O—d

(Mrs. Francis Sargent Osgood)

THOU wouldst be loved?—then let thy heart
From its present pathway part not!
Being everything which now thou art,
Be nothing which thou art not.
So with the world thy gentle ways,
Thy grace, thy more than beauty,
Shall be an endless theme of praise,
And love—a simple duty.

An Enigma

"SELDOM we find," says Solomon Don Dunce,
"Half an idea in the profoundest sonnet.
Through all the flimsy things we see at once
As easily as through a Naples bonnet—
Trash of all trash!—how can a lady don it?
Yet heavier far than your Petrarchan stuff—
Owl-downy nonsense that the faintest puff
Twirls into trunk-paper the while you con it."
And, veritably, Sol is right enough.
The general tuckermanities are arrant
Bubbles—ephemeral and so transparent—
But this is, now—you may depend upon it—
Stable, opaque, immortal—all by dint



Edgar Allan Poe

© Paul Thompson

Of the dear names that lie concealed within it.

(To find the name, read the first letter in the first line, the second in the second, and so on—Sarah Anna Lewis.)

A Dream Within a Dream

TAKE this kiss upon the brow!
And, in parting from you now,
Thus much let me avow—
You are not wrong, who deem
That my days have been a dream;
Yet if hope has flown away
In a night, or in a day,
In a vision, or in none,
Is it therefore the less gone?
All—that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep,
While I weep—while I weep!
O God! can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp.
O God! can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?
Is all that we see or seem
But a dream within a dream?

Current War Poetry

More Sorrows of the Sultan

BERSHEBA gone, and Gaza too!
And lo! the British lion,
After a pause to comb his mane,
Is calmly padding off again,
Tail up, *en route* for Zion.

Yes, things are looking rather blue,
Just as in Mesopotamy;
My life-blood trickles in the sand;
My veins run dry; I cannot stand
Much more of this phlebotomy.

In vain for William's help I cry.
Sick as a mule with glanders;
Too busy—selfish swine—is he
With winning ground in Italy
And losing it in Flanders.

His missives urge me not to fly
But use the utmost fury
To hold these Christian dogs at bay
And for his sake to block the way
To his beloved Jewry.

"My feet," he wired, "have trod those scenes;
Within the walls of Salem
My sacred presence deigned to dwell,
And I should hate these hounds of hell
To be allowed to scale 'em.

"So do your best to give them beans
(You have some ammunition?),
And at a less congested date
I will arrive and consecrate
Another German mission."

That's how he wires, alternate days,
But sends no troops to trammel
The foe that follows as I bump
Across Judæa on the hump
Of my indifferent camel.

Well, I have tried all means and ways,
But seldom fail to foozle 'em;
And now if William makes no sign
(This is his funeral more than mine)
The giaours can have Jerusalem.

—O. S., in *Punch*.

In No Man's Land

THOUGH you be stopped midway in the charge
And sink to earth a thing that may not move;
Though with the common welter of the ground
Slowly and hideously you be lost;
Though you be made many with the grains of earth
And uttermost dispersal be your lot;
Though life become a thing that never was
And remembrance of you on the earth
Be less than a dream that no one ever dreamt;
Yet just you
Shall surprise the shy arisen Christ
Walking in the garden in the dawn.

—Charles H. Murphy, in *The Nation*.

"Stump Speaking"

By George Caleb Bingham

—From *The Art World*

GEORGE CALEB BINGHAM, Virginia born but Missouri bred, belonged to the early and middle nineteenth century. Though a prolific maker of portraits in his own region, he was also known as an "anecdote artist," and left valuable pictures of life from Kansas and Missouri before and after the Civil War. His "Jolly Flatboatmen" won the prize in one of the annual competitions of the old American Art Union of New York. "The Art World" throws some interesting light on his early life:

"Despite his surroundings, George Bingham, while he worked as a carpenter, indulged himself in attempts at portraiture, and finally resolved to make that his career. He went to Washington . . . and set up a tent near the Capitol, with a sign out which informed the world that here was . . . an *artist* ready to draw or paint likenesses."

The New Mascagni Opera

"Lodoletta," an opera in three acts, the book by Forzano and the music by Pietro Mascagni. Given its first American performance at the Metropolitan Saturday, January 12.

"THE production of a new opera," admits "The Sun," "ought to be a fruitful topic, but in the present instance there is little enough to say."

And this is a sentiment that finds its echo in "The Evening Post," wherein appears this paragraph:

"It is the latest work by the composer of 'Cavalleria Rusticana,' who has been producing operas ever since that work made its success—but they have all been failures. 'Lodoletta' seems destined to consort with the majority, rather than with the minority of one. 'Cavalleria,' crude and banal though it is, has tragic force—the present work has not even pathos, beyond the mere fact of the death of the heroine. The plot is no better and no worse than a number of opera books which have won more or less success. But the music is so absolutely devoid of character, melody, interest of any sort, that it is difficult to write about it."

In "The Evening Mail" one read:

"Musically the work cannot be placed ahead of the many other pleasant mediocrities that have flowed from the pen of the Italian composer since he placed the stamp of genius upon 'Cavalleria Rusticana.' It is reminiscent of 'Iris,' though less significant, and there are occasional marked borrowings from Puccini, as in the Scarpia motif of the second act.

"The choral passages are cleverly written, with especial charm in those allotted to the boys, and there is a sustained and individual beauty in the music which accompanies the death of old Antonio. Otherwise the score is alternately obvious and artificially involved."

This paper noted, however, that the new opera "is an assured popular success, if only because it gives Caruso a part exactly adapted to his vocal and dramatic abilities." And now that Caruso has been mentioned it is well to go on and communicate some of the general satisfaction expressed by the critics over the singing of the work. "The American" declared:

"Whatever the merits or demerits of 'Lodoletta,' however—and let it be noted at once that the work is not of a sort to produce violent discussion—it ought to prove a valuable addition to the repertory of the Metropolitan Opera House, if for no other reason than that it offers quite unusual opportunities for the vocal and dramatic persuasions of Geraldine Farrar and Enrico Caruso, who, as every one knows, are Signor Gatti-Casazza's most potent box office magnets."

The Tribune recorded this opinion:

"Mr. Caruso has in Flammen a part which allows him to sing as the gods meant he should, and he makes the most of the opportunity. It was Caruso at his best, his golden tone, his feeling, his flexibility of utterance uniting under the control of a just taste. Moreover, Mr. Caruso wore a beard, and a beard ever becomes him. The public will love him in the part. Histrionically Miss Farrar was at her best and sincerest, though vocally she is not yet herself. Her Lodoletta is a creation not unworthy of being placed beside her Goose Girl."

Yes, on the side of interpretation "Lodoletta" appears to have carried everything before it. Even the plot, according to one critic, isn't half bad. This observation comes from "The Herald":

"The story is full of contrasts. It is admirably adapted to an operatic setting. If Mr. Mascagni had only put some red blood into his music. If only it rose with the movement of the drama. But always it is quiet. The orchestration is purposely thin. There are melodies that charm and throughout there is a simplicity that some other modern composers might copy with impunity."

"The Globe" treats Mascagni's new work in a mood of fine spun satire. If space permitted the entire review, written by Mr. Pitts Sanborn, could be here reproduced very effectively. At any rate, this paragraph must not be passed over:

"No, it really is quite too sad, this sad, sad tale of 'Lodoletta,' but even so perhaps not quite so sad as Mascagni's music for it. That is always hovering on the teary smile of 'La Boheme,' then suddenly remembering itself, and, resolutely a-scowl, whining a dour plaint into Othello's fateful handkerchief. Mascagni seems to have made up his mind on no account to rewrite 'Cavalleria Rusticana' only to lose himself hopelessly in a maze of treacherous Puccini shallows flanked by frowning cliffs of Verdi. However, the music of 'Lodoletta' is not pretentious, and that is perhaps the kindest thing that can be said about it."

Concerts

Leo Ornstein

THIS pianist has just returned from a tour of the West—returned, according to "The Evening Sun," with an evidently increased zest for the temperamental demands of those modern composers whom it is his delight to play—and his privilege to play so understandingly. This paper further described the pleasures of the occasion (which was staged at Aeolian Hall on Tuesday afternoon) in the following manner:

"By way of obeisance to the classics, Mr. Ornstein played a Beethoven sonata first. He did not give it the established interpretation, of course, any more than he did the four Chopin pieces which he later played—or any more, in fact, than would be wanted of an artist who, by reason of his strong musical curiosity and indomitableness, is bound to whatever medium by the marks of his own peculiar energy. He was, to be sure, best in the Scriabine and Ravel compositions, to which he is more attuned and to which his remarkable tone colorations and agile technique are doubtless more suitable. Two 'Arabesques' of Debussy could hardly have been more exquisitely done."

"The Globe" praised the artist very highly:

"Among contemporary pianists few, young or old, approach Mr. Ornstein in command of tone-color and taste in using it. Dazzling in contrast, or endlessly subtle in gradation, the color he employed throughout the programme was astonishing, ravishing, disarming. It almost succeeded in persuading one that beyond color there is nothing in music. But not quite. And just there was the little rift within the lute of our delight, though fail it did to make the music mute."

Yolanda Mero

MME. MERO, pianist, included Schumann's "Kreisleriana" in her programme on Monday at Aeolian Hall. "The Evening Post," which is not partial to this composition, yet recorded that the artist "played it warmly and sympathetically." She was, this paper thought—

"at her best in her Liszt group, where her forceful, brilliant touch and almost Rooseveltian vitality were exhibited to great advantage in one of the 'Etudes Transcendantes' and the Sixth Rhapsody. Between these Mme. Mérö placed the exquisite Schubert-Liszt 'Impromptu' in G major. She played this idyllic work as finely as its more brilliant companions. Beethoven and Bach filled out a programme which was commendably short."

"The Sun" wrote:

"Mme. Mérö has forged ahead steadily in her art and is now one of the most interesting pianists before the public. The outset of her career in this country found her not yet at the maturity of her powers and she has had to labor assiduously to overcome the impression then made. But she has done so through sheer persistence and noteworthy improvement."

Hartridge Whipp

THE barytone from the West sang at Aeolian Hall Monday evening. The programme, according to "The Journal"—"was a somewhat curious assemblage of songs and oratorio and operatic excerpts that Mr. Whipp gathered together for exposition, but the exposition was forcible and assured.

"Mr. Whipp, as a fact, brought with him out of the West a voice of great power and nice range—of basso depth at one end and extended by a somewhat needless falsetto at the other. His enunciation was excellent, and he displayed some grasp of expression. His chief fault is a lack of polish, of finish. Also he frequently forces his voice off the pitch."

"His big voice needs only a bit of refining to make it commanding," "The Evening World" felt.

A New Offering at the Playhouse

"The Heritage," a play by Eugene Walter, presented by the Shuberts at the Playhouse on Monday evening.

"THE HERALD" picturesquely begins its chronicle of proceedings with this statement:

"Eugene Walter up and smote old Mrs. Drama one on the eye last night that probably has made her madder than a wet hen, and which will bring her around to the Playhouse every night for the next few months to see what a bold and confident playwright did to her."

The reactions of this new individual in the realm of criticism, this "Mrs. Drama," must remain largely matter of speculation. Of the play itself, however, there are things to be noted. John Corbin remarks in "The Times":

"Whatever else may be said of Eugene Walter's study of crime, it is the antithesis of all other crook plays. The audience last night at The Playhouse supped full of horrors, unrelieved by any but the faintest gleam of comedy."

Alan Dale, in "The American," found "The Heritage" "quite curious drama." He wrote as follows:

"Two of the characters, a brother and sister, have this nauseous ailment—or is it a disease? Brother is not at all cast down. Usually, he sits at the piano and plays beautifully—really classical music. There is a world of feeling in his instrumentation. And yet he suffers from the murder lust.

"Little sister Maria is charming. In one act she appears in a sweet gold dress, most admirably confected. She is nice and brunette and very girlish. And yet she has the murder lust—oh, quite badly. In one scene she kills Kitten Cat—poor little animal! It is her heritage. Suddenly the mania appears, and then—cat murder. Kitten Cat was done to death off stage—let us be grateful to Mr. Walter for that—and then the oppressed gell rushes on and confides in her brother the curious emotions that had prompted the sorry deed.

"All this seemed extremely tedious to me for at least three acts. Both brother and sister were so remarkably cheerful and nice about it all. . . .

"In the last scene of all the melodrama grows tenser and tenser, and when it is time to go home you are 'loosed out' from the Playhouse fully convinced that Mr. Walter has startled and excited you—which, as a matter of fact, he has done for a few minutes only."

What Conrad Has to Say About "Lord Jim"

A new preface, in which the author tells how the tale grew, and also defends it against the charge of morbidity.

JOSEPH CONRAD comes to the rescue of the book reviewers, setting forth plainly and briefly just what were his intentions in the production of the famous romance, "Lord Jim," one of the best known of his works. There has been a good deal of debate over the question of the initial idea of the book. Was it to have been merely a short story? And did it carry the writer away and away, into far fields of imaginative roaming, thus, by sheer virtue of its own momentum, becoming a full length novel?

Well, Mr. Conrad places himself on record, in the preface of a new edition of "Lord Jim," published by Doubleday, Page & Co. The preface enjoys a first printing in the current issue of "The Bookman," and has been widely discussed by reviewers.

By Joseph Conrad

WHEN this novel first appeared in book form a notion got about that I had been bolted away with. Some reviewers maintained that the work starting as a short story had got beyond the writer's control. One or two discovered internal evidence of the fact which seemed to amuse them. They pointed out the limitations of the narrative form. They argued that no man could have been expected to talk all that time, and other men to listen so long. It was not, they said, very credible.

After thinking it over for something like sixteen years I am not so sure about that. Men have been known, both in the tropics and in the temperate zone, to sit up half the night "swapping yarns." This, however, is but one yarn, yet with interruptions affording some measure of relief; and in regard to the listener's endurance, the postulate must be accepted that the story was interesting. It is the necessary preliminary assumption. If I had not believed that it was interesting I could never have begun to write it. As to the mere physical possibility, we all know that some speeches in Parliament have taken nearer six than three hours in delivery; whereas, all that part of the book which is Marlow's narrative can be read through aloud, I should say, in less than three hours. Besides—though I have kept strictly all such insignificant details out of the tale—we may presume that there must have been refreshments on that night, a glass of mineral water of some sort to help the narrator on.

Joseph Conrad

© Paul Thompson

But, seriously, the truth of the matter is that my first thought was of a short story, concerned only with the pilgrim ship episode; nothing more. And that was a legitimate conception. After writing a few pages, however, I became for some reason discontented and I laid them aside for a time. I did not take them out of the drawer till the late Mr. William Blackwood suggested I should give something again to his magazine.

It was only then that I perceived that the pilgrim ship episode was a good starting point for a free and wandering tale; that it was an event, too, which could conceivably color the whole "sentiment of existence" in a simple and sensitive character. But all these preliminary moods and stirrings of spirit were rather obscure at the time, and they do not appear clearer to me now after the lapse of so many years.

The few pages I had laid aside were not without their weight in the choice of subject. But the whole was rewritten deliberately. When I sat down to it I knew it would be a long book, though I did not foresee that it would spread itself over thirteen numbers of "Maga."

I have been asked at times whether this was not the book of mine I liked best. I am a great foe to favoritism in public life, in private life, and even in the delicate relationship of an author to his works. As a matter of principle I will have no favorites; but I do not go so far as to feel aggrieved and annoyed by the preference some people give to my "Lord Jim." I will not even say that I "fail to understand." . . . No! But once I had occasion to be puzzled and surprised.

A friend of mine returning from Italy had talked with a lady there who did not like the book. I regretted that, of course, but what surprised me was the ground of her dislike. "You know," she said, "it is all so morbid."

The pronouncement gave me food for an hour's anxious thought. Finally I arrived at the conclusion that, making due allowances for the subject itself being rather foreign to women's normal sensibilities, the lady could not have been an Italian. I wonder whether she was European at all? In any case, no Latin temperament would have perceived anything morbid in the acute consciousness of lost honor. Such a consciousness may be wrong, or it may be right, or it may be condemned as artificial; and, perhaps, my Jim is not a type of wide commonness. But I can safely assure my readers that he is not the product of coldly perverted thinking. He is not a figure of northern mists, either. One sunny morning, in the commonplace surroundings of an eastern roadstead, I saw his form pass by—appealing—significant—under a cloud—perfectly silent. Which is as it should be. It was for me, with all the sympathy of which I was capable, to seek fit words for his meaning. He was "one of us."

Army Slang

THE following vocabulary of army slang has been compiled by "The Wadsworth Gas Attack and Rio Grande Rattler." Some of the words are already perfectly familiar to civilians, but there are others which will represent acquisitions. This is the list:

Beans—The commissary sergeant.

Bean-Shooter—A commissary officer.

Belly-Ache—To complain.

Black-Strap—Liquid coffee.

Blind—Sentenced by court martial to forfeiture of pay without confinement.

Bob-Tail—A dishonorable discharge or a discharge without honor; to be "bob-tailed"—to be dishonorably discharged or to be given a discharge without honor.

Bone—To study; a mistake.

Bone, Bootlick on—To cultivate the favor of.

Bootlick—To flatter.

Bow-Legs—Cavalryman.

Buck-Private—A term sometimes used in referring to a private.

Bucking for Orderly—Giving clothing and accoutrements extra cleaning so as to compete for orderly.

Bunkie—A soldier who shares the shelter of a comrade.

Bust—To reduce a non-commissioned officer to the grade of private.

Butcher—The company barber.

Canned Horse—Canned beef.

Chief—Name by which the chief musician of the band is usually called by the enlisted men.

Cit—A civilian.

Cits—Civilian clothes.

C. O.—Commanding officer.

Coffee Cooler—One who seeks a "soft" detail.

Cold Feet—Fear, lack of courage.

Crawl—To admonish.

Doughboy—Infantryman.

Duff—Any sweet edible.

File—A number on the lineal list.

Fogy—Ten per cent increase of officer's pay for each five years' service.

Found—To be deficient or wanting in anything, especially an exam.

French Leave—Unauthorized absence.

Gold Brick—An unattractive girl.

Gold Fish—Salmon.

Goat—Junior officer in post, regiment, etc.

Goaty—Awkward, ignorant.

Guard House Lawyer—A soldier with a smattering knowledge of regulations and military law; quite loquacious and liberal with advice and counsel to men in the guardhouse or other trouble.

Hardtack—Hard bread, biscuits.

Hike—To march, to hike.

Hive—To discover, to catch.

Hobo—The provost sergeant.

Holy Joe—The chaplain.

Hop—A dance.

I. C.—Is condemned by an inspector.

Jaw-Bone—Credit (to get things on "jaw bone," to buy things on credit).

Jump—To admonish.

K. O.—Commanding officer.

Major—Name by which the sergeant major is usually called by the enlisted men.

Mule Skinner—A teamster.

O. D.—Officer of the day, olive drab.

Old Issul—An old soldier.

Old File—An old soldier.

On Official Terms—Not to be on speaking teams except officially.

On the Carpet—Called before the commanding officer for admonition.

Passing the Buck—Passing responsibility on to some one else.